

Engineers Train on Essential Earthmoving Tasks

LT Patrick Maher - Platoon Leader

For two, hot, June Georgia days' members of Second Platoon, 526th Engineer Company trained on what is not always looked upon as "Mission Essential Tasks" in the Army world. We moved dirt. In the realm of an Army Engineer it is not just a "*Shoot, Move, and communicate*" lifestyle. Yes these attributes are the foundation of any great unit and are vital to their success, but we are also equipment operators.

In just 6 months, 2nd Platoon alone has more than doubled in size with new Soldiers. This results in the problem; unfamiliar and untrained Soldiers operating heavy equipment. The answer; dig, dig, and dig some more. As we prepare for an immediate Continental United States deployment and later an over seas deployment, it is essential that we take the time now to have the operators know everything about the equipment. Not just how to drive it but how to troubleshoot it as well. The more operating becomes second nature to these Soldiers, the more productive they become. Instead of having to look at their controls to know what each lever does they can be watching where they are going and scanning their areas for potential hostile threats.

Earlier in the year we did an operators training exercise to allow Soldiers to take tests and obtain their operator's license for the equipment. This time it was to practice and learn the skills required to operate the engineer earth moving equipment and get a feel for what it's like to be in heat category five (the Army's hottest working temperature) in full combat gear and still execute a mission. For two days 2nd Platoon built berms, ditches, and moved dirt in preparation of their upcoming deployments. They also surveyed several accesses roads with grade stakes and drainage ditches. Soldiers rotated through two Caterpillar Bulldozers, two Caterpillar Graders, and one Caterpillar Scraper throughout the days accomplishing their mission.

The training proved invaluable for the Platoon. The medics' wet bulb reached heat category five by 0930 each morning, almost perfectly simulating overseas deployments to Iraq or Afghanistan. Now, 2nd Platoon Soldiers have a much clearer understanding of the tasks and purpose of what they are expected to do when called upon.



Figure 1: SSG Arnold Geordies demonstrates on a Road Grader the Correct way to cut a drainage ditch on. (LT Patrick Maher)



Figure 2: SSG William Creech instructs PVT Orlopp proper controlling of a D7 Dozer while on top of the berm (LT Patrick Maher)



Figure 3: PFC Haynes puts the final touches on the berm with a D7 Dozer. (LT Patrick Maher)



Figure 4: The final Product; a 4 foot high 24 foot wide berm (LT Patrick Maher)



Figure 5: Soldiers of Second Platoon place grade stake in the ground that will serve as the guidelines for where the service road will be cut (LT Patrick Maher)